

LAVOY TABLES ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA-OR-026-02-025

6 February 2002

Bureau of Land Management  
Burns District Office  
28910 Hwy 20 West  
Hines, Oregon 97738

LAVOY TABLES ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
EA-OR-026-02-025

1. INTRODUCTION: Purpose of and Need for Action

A. Background

The Lavoy Tables Allotment is located directly west of Frenchglen. Elevation ranges from 4,200 to 5,465 feet.

This document analyzes the Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and grazing management in the Lavoy Tables Allotment #6031. The AMP stating the objectives for this allotment was prepared and signed in 1991. The Lavoy Tables Allotment was a pasture in the North Catlow Allotment until 1991 at which time, through a grazing agreement, this allotment was created.

An allotment evaluation was completed in 2002 by an Interdisciplinary (ID) Team which analyzed grazing management and the AMP objectives in relation to the Oregon/Washington Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. Management was found to be in conformance with those standards.

The allotment evaluation found that grazing management was meeting the AMP objectives of:

1. Provide 2,373 AUM's for livestock, 36 AUM's for wild horses and 60 AUM's for wildlife.
2. Maintain and/or improve ecological status of the allotment.
3. Maintain wilderness characteristics within the Blitzen River Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

The allotment evaluation also found that this area has a moderate probability for containing National Register Eligible archaeological sites and recommended an inventory to determine the presence of cultural resources.

Other recommendations made during the evaluation were to retain AMP objectives, continue existing studies, continue with the current grazing system, manage fences to allow access by horses into the Herd Management Area (HMA), designate the Highway Pasture as a trailing area only, and amend the AMP to reflect Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) estimated big game forage requirements.

The current grazing system in place since the signing of the 1991 AMP, utilizes a rotational grazing strategy of early use (1 Apr - 30 Apr), graze use (1 May - 15 Jul), and deferred use (16 Jul - 31 Oct) in all pastures. This allows for regrowth, reproduction and maintains vigor in herbaceous species.

The P-Hill Pasture was split in 1994 creating the Highway Pasture. Since that time seasonal grazing in the Highway Pasture was discontinued due to safety concerns. This pasture was taken out of the grazing rotation and only trailing use has been authorized.

Current monitoring indicates wildlife AUMs may be increased to correspond with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) forage estimates for big game without decreasing wild horse and livestock AUMs.

#### **B. Purpose and Need**

1. The purpose of the proposal is to offer the permittee a term grazing permit. The need for the proposal is to ensure that the grazing system achieves the multiple use objectives and the standards for rangeland health, and to ensure compliance with BLM grazing regulations and policies.
2. Reduce safety concerns in the Highway Pasture.
3. Adjust the AMP to correspond with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) estimated forage requirements.

#### **C. Conformance with Land Use Plans**

The proposed action is in accordance with the 1982 Andrews Management Framework Plan (MFP) (page 7), the 1983 Andrews Grazing Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)(pg 1-1), the 1984 Range Program Summary, and the 1989 Final Oregon Wilderness EIS (pg 399).

## **II. ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION**

#### **A. Proposed Action:**

The proposed action is to:

1. Renew the 10 year permit from 2002 to 2012 with an active preference of 2,373. The season and timing of use would be from April 1 to October 31 in a deferred rotation grazing system.
2. Amend the AMP to designate the Highway Pasture as a trailing area only.
3. Amend the AMP to indicate wildlife AUMs as 143 AUMs from 60 AUMs.

#### **B. Alternative (No Action):**

The no action alternative would eliminate livestock grazing on public lands within the Lavoy Tables Allotment. This alternative was considered but not developed because it will not

accomplish resource objectives for the allotment, is not in conformance with the 1983 Andrews Grazing Management EIS, and because of the economic impacts to the permit holder and the surrounding community. This alternative also was not analyzed because of the increase in safety concerns with using the Highway Pasture as other than a trailing pasture.

### **III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

1. The following critical elements are not known to be present, or there are no known effects from the proposed action or alternatives:

ACECs, air quality, adverse energy impacts, cultural heritage, environmental justice, prime or unique farmlands, flood plains, hazardous materials, Native American religious concerns, noxious weeds, paleontology, special status plants or animals, water quality and riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness or WSAs.

2. The following critical elements and resources are present in the area and are subject to analysis:

a. Special Status Species:

Three Greater sage-grouse leks have been identified in this allotment, one of which has been monitored yearly by ODFW and is known to be active. One lek site is historic and the third site was monitored by ODFW during 2001 for the presence of strutting males. Much of this allotment has been identified as year long habitat for sage grouse and the rest is considered nesting to late brood rearing habitat.

Two species of migratory songbirds, sage sparrow and vesper sparrow, both BLM sensitive species, are known to breed and nest in the area.

Diverse-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton diversifolius*) , a special status species, does occur in reservoirs within the allotment and has been found in the Savoy Lake pasture at Juniper Reservoir and N. of Peanut Lake Reservoir.

No other special status animal or plant species are known to occur in this allotment.

b. Migratory Birds:

About 40 species of migratory birds have been observed in this allotment and adjacent areas. Some of these species include gray flycatcher, dusky flycatcher, Say's phoebe, sage thrasher, Brewer's sparrow, chipping sparrow, house finch, Cassin's finch, common nighthawk and mourning dove.

c. Specially Designated Areas:

The Pickett Rim ACEC has several raptor nest sites identified. Special status species identified include golden eagle, and prairie falcon. Pickett Rim has been identified as possible nest/hack area for peregrine falcons (BLM Sensitive species), but no nest sites have been identified to date. Ferruginous hawks (BLM sensitive species) have not been observed to date in this allotment but habitat for this species is present.

d. Socioeconomics:

The planning area consists of land in Harney County, and, although the county is large, the population is small. Harney County agriculture is based principally on livestock ranching and hay production.

4. The following non-critical elements would not be affected by the proposed action or the alternatives and based on the following discussions, will not be further analyzed.

a. Vegetation:

Vegetation includes native bunch grasses, crested wheat grass, sagebrush and juniper. Through the allotment evaluation, the current rotational grazing system was found to be sufficient to meet plant requirements while meeting other management objectives.

b. Recreation:

Recreation includes hiking, hunting and bird watching. These activities would not be affected by this proposal.

c. Visual Resource Management (VRM):

The Lavoy Tables Allotment includes 4 VRM classifications with Class I being assigned to WSAs. The definition of Class I VRM is: To preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention. This proposal would create no change to wilderness characteristics.

d. Wildlife:

Wildlife includes antelope, deer, badger, coyote, hawks and other raptors. Most of the big game use occurs during the winter when livestock are not in the allotment. The Lavoy Tables allows for livestock grazing while still promoting wildlife habitat diversity. It was found, through the allotment evaluation, that actual available AUMs exceeded the

permit preference and that an AUM increase for wildlife would not affect wild horse or livestock AUMs.

e. Wild horses:

A portion of the South Steens Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) is also contained within the P-Hill Pasture. Access to this part of the HMA by horse is limited due to boundary fences. Gates would be left open prior to and after cattle have left the P-Hill pasture to allow access.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

a. Special Status Species:

Greater sage-grouse populations have been declining over the long term throughout the northwest. Current management actions have caused a steady upward trend in upland conditions throughout the northwest. Current grazing management would not affect sage-grouse habitat.

The fact that Diverse-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton diversifolius*) occurs around reservoirs which are used fairly heavily by livestock, would indicate that this plant species may be unaffected by grazing.

b. Migratory Birds:

There is no information to suggest that implementing the proposed action would have an effect on breeding and/or nesting populations of migratory birds.

d. Specially Designated Areas:

Through the evaluation process, it was determined that the Pickett Rim ACEC does not require special management to protect resources or maintain existing values, as the ACEC consists solely of a series of high rock cliffs and would not be affected by the proposed action.

e. Socioeconomics:

Cattle production in Harney County has a calculated dependency on BLM forage of 37%.

Changes in livestock grazing translate into direct and indirect economic impacts to the permit holder and the surrounding community relative to the total economy.

No economically disadvantaged or minority groups have been identified who are either known to be economically dependent on BLM land or who have the potential to be

economically dependent on BLM resources or programs.

5. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. No cumulative impacts were identified as a result of the proposed actions or alternatives.

6. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Pete Frost, National Wildlife Federation  
Jim Lemos, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Dave McAllister, Oregon Department of fish and Wildlife  
Steve Grasty, Harney County Court

7. LIST OF PREPARERS

Manuel Berain, Range Technician  
Dean Bolstad, Wild Horse Management Specialist  
Miles Brown, Andrews Resource Area Field Manager  
Darren Brumback, Fisheries Biologist  
Mary Emerick, Outdoor Recreation Planner (Wilderness Specialist)  
Gary Foulkes, Planning and Environmental Coordinator  
Rick Hall, Natural Resource Specialist (T&E, ACEC's)  
Glenn Patterson, Natural Resource Specialist  
Matt Obradovich, Wildlife Biologist  
Joan Suther, Acting Steens Program Manager  
Evelyn Treiman, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Scott Thomas, Archeologist

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A: General Location Map  
Appendix B: Pasture Breakdown  
Appendix C: Special Management Areas  
Appendix D: Lavoy Tables AMP  
Appendix E: Rock Creek Ranch 10-year Permit